

CULTURAL COALITION

serving southeastern & northeastern CT

P.O. Box 95, New London, CT 06320 | (860) 448-5135 | info@CultureSECT.org | www.CultureSECT.org

DATE: February 16, 2022
TO: Appropriations Committee
FROM: Wendy Bury, Executive Director, Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition

Dear Co-Chairs Osten and Walker; Vice-Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan; Ranking Members Miner and France, and members of the Appropriations Committee

First, on behalf of the Cultural Coalition, a nonprofit organization that serves nearly 600 arts, cultural and creative businesses across 42 towns in eastern CT and one of eight Designated Regional Service Organizations for the CT Office of the Arts to support the Department of Economic and Community Development, thank you for your support in the FY22-23 budget passed last year. The budget provided unprecedented levels of funding for arts, culture and tourism - sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic and enormous drivers of CT's economy, vitality and quality of life. The funds began to "hit the streets" last year and we consistently hear stories about and appreciation of these funds that are going into neighborhood programs, organizations and anchor institutions to help sustain and weather the storm of the pandemic.

Second, I am writing to request specific investments from the General Fund or unallocated ARPA funds that will have continued and significant impact.

- 1) \$100,000 for the *first four* municipalities in eastern CT that are officially designated as "[Cultural Districts](#)" by CT Office of the Arts/DECD with funds to be administered by the Cultural Coalition, to be comprised of \$25,000 for each municipality's newly formed Cultural District Commission or Committee. Funding to be used for district planning, marketing, data/research, and promotion. This funding will encourage and incentivize the formation of Cultural Districts, one of CT's newer and effective marketing tools for municipalities and the State of CT, as well as for economic and community recovery from the pandemic.

Currently, in eastern CT and in partnership with the Cultural Coalition, there are five municipalities at various stages of Cultural District formation and designation. Establishing permanent municipal infrastructure to support the arts and cultural community and creative economy is critical to long term recovery, resiliency and sustainability of the sector.

- 2) \$200,000 for a statewide workforce development assessment report for the creative sector – for profits, nonprofits and individual artists – to better understand the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic shifts in workforce needs, projections and future demands. Study to be directed and overseen by CT Office of the Arts in coordination with the eight Designated Regional Service Organizations. Study focus: pre-covid landscape and data; changes to workforce pipeline due to covid (loss/additions of talent); additions/eliminations of staffing positions due post-covid (temporary vs. permanent); projections/demand curve for industry to plan for workforce pipeline needs (an increase and scale up or a decrease and mitigate).
- 3) Support for Governor Lamont's budget proposal that directs \$27.5M to Connecticut Summer at the Museum '22 and provides \$5M for related transportation. This expanded funding will increase access to museums and encourage further public engagement and enrichment during the

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summer. Your continued investment in Connecticut's cultural sector – our arts, our museums, our public spaces – connects us with each other and contributes to our state's civic vitality and vibrancy.

The Cultural Coalition serves as the “voice” of the arts and cultural sector and the liaison between the sector and leadership entities invested in regional revitalization, and we provide core services to connect, strengthen, and advocate for the arts and cultural community. From sole proprietors, artists and small volunteer-run organizations, to historical societies and sites and professionally staffed museums, tourist attractions and arts centers, the Coalition includes a diverse cross section of nonprofit and for-profit individuals, businesses, groups and organizations.

Pre-pandemic, arts and culture represented 5% of CT's economy, generated \$9 billion annually, and supported 57,000 jobs. CT's nonprofit arts and cultural organizations generated \$800 million annually. Nonprofit arts and cultural economic activity in New London County alone, \$168 million, was greater than each of the following states: Vermont, Delaware and Maine (Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, Southeastern Connecticut, 2015). The small corner of the state packs an enormous economic punch, and represents 1/5 of the CT's total nonprofit arts and cultural economic activity and attracts millions of visitors every year. Data for the northeast region is coming in 2023.

Beyond their economic impact, arts and culture are central to the decision-making process for businesses, workers, families, and visitors. Investment in the creative sector is one of CT's best economic and community development tools. Vibrant communities attract and retain residents, businesses, employees and tourists. Investment in arts and culture supports workforce development, innovation through cultivation of creative thinking, strong communities, and a major contributor to our quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wendy Bury
Executive Director